

INNOCENCE VINDICATED,

Gordon (Lord George) K 3
AND THE

Intrigues of Popery and its Abettors displayed,

I N A N

AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE

Of some Transactions, hitherto unknown, relating to a late
Act of the British Legislature in favour of English Papists,
and the Petition presented to Parliament for its Repeal.

P A R T I.

[THE SECOND EDITION.]

L O N D O N :

PRINTED AND SOLD BY R. DENHAM, No. 20,

SALISBURY SQUARE.

[PRICE TWO-PENCE.]

M, DCC, LXXXIII.

INNOVATION INDICATED

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NEW HENRY VAN RANDE

Of some Transactions, which is unknown, relating to a

At the British Museum, London, 1883



[THE SECOND EDITION]

Printed and sold by W. D. BARNARD, No. 20

St. Martin's Lane, London

[THE TWO PRICES]

W. D. BARNARD

Copy of a Letter from the Right Honourable Lord GEORGE GORDON, to the Right Honourable CHARLES WOLFRAN CORNWALL, Speaker of the House of Commons.

S I R,

I Am pretty well acquainted with the characters of some of the members of the present monstrous coalition of parties, or factions; who have at length, it matters not how, got the King and the reins of government into their hands and power.

I think there are some dangerous incendiaries and malignants in this desperate combination, who have divided the King from the people, separated the Protestant Colonies from the Crown of these kingdoms, sowed the seeds of civil war in Great Britain and Ireland, and brought the true public liberty, safety, and peace of these kingdoms (wherein every family's private condition is included) into the utmost peril by their conspiracies, attempts, and practices; and bearing also upon my mind the foreign and revolting state of the kingdom of Ireland at this time, the ignorant and deluded estate of the kingdom of England, and the dangerous estate of my own country, the kingdom of Scotland; under such circumstances, I do now, at last (after other means of supplication, remonstrance, protestation, and suffering) resolve and determine to reveal and make known some truths concerning the mischievous politics which I have seen carried on and countenanced by his Majesty's confidential servants for many years past: that by so doing the final and approaching accomplishment of our ruin may be timely prevented or removed. And this I promise to do in [the great name of the Lord our God, the only living and true God, the searcher of all hearts, with a true intention to perform the same: and I neither fear the foul aspersion of treason, or rebellion, or whatever else my adversaries, from their craft or malice, would put upon me; seeing that what I intend to do is well warranted, and arises from an unfeigned desire to maintain the true worship of God, the majesty of the King, and the common happiness of all ranks of the people, from generation to generation; and believing that *the Lord of Hosts is with us: the God of Jacob is our refuge.*

Being bound then by the laws of God and of man, to resist
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all treasonable uproars and hostilities raised against the true religion, and the King's majesty, and the prosperity of the people, it is my purpose, without further ceremony, to open up to the world a very dark series of transactions, which I was personally, and I hope honourably, concerned in; and I can prove every matter that I shall assert at the bar of your honourable House, or in any lawful court of justice for state criminals.

You, Mr. Speaker, and the rest of the representatives of the people, in Parliament assembled, if you will do your duties and act virtuously, are certainly the fittest assembly, and most lawful congress to deliberate upon the mysterious and obscure subjects I shall lay before the public. It is not my intention to trouble you with too much at one time. At present I only desire that you will submit to the perusal of the House of Commons the following Narrative of the Heads of a Conversation concerning the English Popery Bill, which passed between Lord Petre and me, previous to the riots of June, in the year 1780.

I am, Sir, with all due respect,

Your most obedient, and humble servant,

Welbeck-street, London, April 21, 1783.

G. GORDON,

(Narrative of the HEADS of a CONVERSATION between Lord PETRE and Lord GEORGE GORDON. Written by Lord George Gordon, when he was in the Tower, for the use, and information, and at the desire of his Counsellors Lloyd Kenyon, Thomas Erskine, Robert Mac Intosh, Edmund Dayrell, Francis Hargrave, and Albany Wallis.)

EARLY in the spring of the year 1780, long before the riots, I met Sir Edward Astley, baronet, in Lower Grosvenor-street. Sir Edward said, he had been calling at my house, and wanted to speak to me. He then mentioned something concerning the Papists in Norfolk, which county he represents in Parliament, having signed the addresses in support of the American war, and Lord North's administration, instead of the petitions of the people for the redress of grievances. After some other street conversation of a general nature, he opened the business he had to communicate to me, which was this, *That Lord Petre, not being acquainted with me, had desired him (Sir Edward Astley) to ask leave for Lord Petre to wait upon me on the subject of the Popery Bill.*

I observed to Sir Edward Astley, that as Lord Petre was a nobleman of high rank, one who had served as host to the King
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at Warley camp, a man of great possessions, and my senior in years, I thought it would be more becoming in me to wait upon Lord Petre : especially, as my house was a poor one, and at that time open upon all lawful days for Protestants to sign their petition ; and seeing them might be offensive or disagreeable to his Lordship : I therefore desired Sir Edward Astley to carry my compliments to Lord Petre, and tell him that I should have the honour of writing to him next day to know at what house, or place, or hour his Lordship would allow me to wait upon him ?

I communicated this overture to a judicious friend that same afternoon, but it was his opinion that it would be more proper to let Lord Petre come to wait upon me, at my own house, on that public business, and occasion of the Protestant Associations, than for me to wait upon Lord Petre. However, good as that counsel has since appeared to me, I did at that time, after giving my friend the same reasons I gave to Sir Edward Astley, use the freedom to tell him, that I did not intend to follow his advice respecting that ceremony, but still preferred waiting upon Lord Petre, as my duty.

Sir Edward Astley, and my Friend, can bear witness so far.

Next morning, when I had just taken hold of the pen to write to Lord Petre, Mr. Banfield (now a hatter and hosier in the Strand, and at that time one of the Protestant Committee, though he has since left us) was shewed up stairs to me, and began to inform me of some violent expressions a Papist had been using, such as *that he hoped soon to walk up to the knees in Protestant blood*, and of some other matters on the subject of the Popery Bill, and the Protestant Petition, then signed by about thirty thousand men.—At that instant, Lord Petre came into the drawing room, where we were sitting. The street door, being open for the Protestants to sign their Petition, in my parlour, there was no knock made, that I heard, or any ceremony of admittance. My butler, John Mac Queen, having announced that it was Lord Petre, Mr. Banfield, with great politeness, retired immediately ; and I told Mac Queen not to let any body up stairs to interrupt Lord Petre's visit.

Mr. Banfield, and John Mac Queen, can witness so far.

Lord Petre, after he did me the honour to sit down, seemed a good deal confused ; and I had never, to my knowledge, seen his Lordship before that time. However, upon perceiving his embarrassment, I thought it a duty of hospitality to speak to him on some familiar subjects, such as asking after Lady Petre, and if his Lordship would take some refreshment, with other conversation, of rather common-place tendency, 'till I observed that his Lordship had recovered himself perfectly. I then used some expressions

expressions verging towards the occasion of his visit, which naturally led his Lordship to mention his business with me.

Lord Petre then spoke, in very obliging and courtly language, to the following effect :—That he had come on purpose to endeavour to prevail on me to withdraw myself from the Protestant Associations :—That they were in general a mean set of people :—That it was entirely owing to me that they had become of consequence :—That if I would withdraw, they would dwindle away presently :—That my great abilities and industry would give weight to any party :—That the Roman Catholics had a very great regard for me :—That they wished me to be informed on the subject :—That they had decreased since the bill passed in their favour :—That he came to me without any of their Priests knowing it :—That he had in his pocket letters to shew me from the head Bishops of the four Roman Catholic divisions of England. —His Lordship then read those letters to me (little small letters like French paper) :—They purported to contain accounts of the numbers of the Jesuits, Ex-Jesuits, Dominicans, Franciscans, and the rest of the Roman Catholic orders in Scotland. —His Lordship observed, that the letter from the York division was not signed by the head Bishop of that district, he being an old infirm man, and sick at the time it was written. Those letters tended to shew Lord Petre that Popery was declining since the Act in favour of it ; which astonished me greatly, having received at that time so much information to the contrary from Protestants in all parts of the kingdom. His Lordship then shewed me a large subscription paper for a new Popish School, or Chapel, the only one, I think his Lordship said, since that Act of Parliament had been passed. His Lordship mentioned his son, or sons, that they were educated abroad, mentioning the names of the Colleges, and brought up for a military life ; but whether his Lordship said he expected them soon to enter into the service of these kingdoms, or into the service of foreign powers, I cannot exactly determine.

To all this I endeavoured to answer Lord Petre in a manner becoming a Protestant Nobleman ; in as soft, obliging, and courteous language as I was master of ; at the same time preserving my integrity and honour in the cause I was engaged to with the English Protestants. With this view of duty, I used the freedom, first, to revert back gently to the commencement of what his Lordship had said, and assured his Lordship, that however mean those concerned in the Protestant Associations might appear to his Lordship, I believed there were many among them, and particularly

particularly the Scots, who acted from principle, as I did myself. I then told his Lordship, that he was mistaken, and had been misinformed as to my abilities, for they were but moderate, and could be of little service to any party; but I could assure his Lordship, that there were men of the greatest abilities in Europe amongst us, and with us, though I did not name their names.— That my withdrawing from the English Protestants (which I would not do) might be of no service to his Lordship's views; for in that case, heated as men's minds were upon the subject, there would probably spring up some Wat Tyler, or a Massanello, who would not have patience or temper to commune at all with Government concerning the Popish Bill; and might very possibly chuse, from motives of ambition, to embroil the nations in a civil war. That I had received good reasons from Protestants for believing that his Lordship was misinformed by those he confided in as to the growth of Popery.—That the foundation of the English Popery Bill, originating from a secret correspondence between Bishop Hay, the head Bishop over the Roman Catholics in Scotland, and Sir John Dalrymple, one of the King's Scots Judges, was of such a dark and designing nature, that neither I, nor any real friend to the free constitution of these kingdoms, or to the House of Hanover (being Protestants) could give it any countenance.

Lord Petre then answered, in a very condescending manner, that if I would not withdraw myself from the Protestant Associations, he wished I would use my influence *to postpone presenting the Petitions*, and not to move in the House of Commons for the repeal of that Bill for *five years*;—and then, at the end of that period, to move for the repeal of that Act, if I thought the Roman Catholics had made an improper use of it.—[Here Lord Petre, on my intimating that I might not be in Parliament at the end of that period, and that I was indispensably bound to do my duty at that time that I had a seat, was pleased to make use of very kind words, expressing his Lordship's opinion, that my manner of speaking and debating in the House of Commons were such, as would always make sure of some parliamentary interest to secure a constant return to Parliament.] His Lordship then intimated that he was not connected with Bishop Hay, who he rather described as being of a rash imprudent temperament of mind. And concluded this division of his discourse with saying, that Papists now did not hold such creeds and principles as Protestants ascribed to them.

I thanked his Lordship for his kind and condescending manner in dealing with me, and replied in as courteous phrases as the conversation

conversation would then bear, to this effect :—That I could not in conscience use any influence his Lordship might suppose I had with Protestants, to induce them to *postpone presenting their Petitions* ; for, I really believed, if the Popery Bill stood as it was, and any one Papist should use half the honest pains to restore the antient and hereditary royal family of Stuart to the throne of these kingdoms that I took to promote the glory of the God of Israel, and the prosperity of the people, the present illustrious Sovereign, and all the rest of the House of Hanover, might find themselves in danger, or exile, in a *fifth* of the time his Lordship required.

This involved reply at first seemed to puzzle Lord Petre ; but after some pause, his Lordship declared that the new Oath the Roman Catholics took to Government, secured their allegiance to the House of Hanover.

I rejoined to this, with, I believe, some more plainness of expression, that that new oath, to which his Lordship had alluded, might indeed secure the allegiance of some Papists to the House of Hanover, who were relaxed in their religious creeds and principles ; or those Papists who had forgotten how much the royal family of Stuart had suffered for their sakes, only, both in person and banishment ; or other Papists who might have their own private reasons for a personal attachment to the present King : but, as for my part, if I was a Papist, or could tolerate Popery, I would not take any oath of allegiance to the House of Hanover (being Protestants) as long as there was an hereditary Popish Prince, of the antient and royal family of Stuart (my own near, dear, and lawful relations) to be found on the face of the earth, and in just and necessary banishment from the throne of these kingdoms, merely for his idolatry in being reconciled to Popery. Besides, as to the new Oath his Lordship mentioned, I added, that Bishop Hay himself had asserted, in his memorial to the House of Commons, that the Roman Catholics had enlisted in great numbers into the last regiments raised in Scotland, to go out to war against the American Colonies ; and that in Scotland, those very Roman Catholics must have taken the same oaths as Protestants take, and in the usual form of swearing and attesting administered to Presbyterians (as the Scots nation had not suffered the Popery Bill to be extended to their country) and which perjuries, on the part of the Roman Catholics, who must have sworn that they were Protestants, I could not account for without a dispensation from the Pope.

Lord Petre answered, that the English Roman Catholics had nothing to do with Bishop Hay ; and popt out, that the English
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Roman Catholics had had some scruples at first about taking the new Oath of allegiance, but *at a late consultation at Paris it was decided they were safe in taking it.*

Whether my countenance, which is a great deal too flexible for political conferences, shewed any alarm on hearing the head of the English Roman Catholics speak to me of a Foreign Council at Paris ; or whether Lord Petre thought it late, and was tired, (we having by that time sat two hours and an half, the fire quite out, and very cold) I cannot exactly determine ; but his Lordship then put up his papers into his pocket.

In getting up from his seat, Lord Petre said *he was afraid Riots might happen on presenting the Petition.*

I instantly asked his Lordship if he knew that any were intended ? Saying at the same time, I never approved of such proceedings, and hoped he would let me know it ever he heard of any attempt of that kind.

Lord Petre answered, that *he heard the people of Rochester were a very riotous people.*

After his Lordship had got half way down stairs, he returned back to my room to see that he had left none of his papers.

I could not help feeling sorry and thoughtful after his Lordship had left me, because I perceived that he went away displeased and abruptly ; and I conceived if I had only made use of more engaging expressions than I did, that I might have communicated my opinions without offending his Lordship. There was no difficulty at all in answering Lord Petre. The difficulty lay in restraining such emotions of the heart, within proper bounds, as his Lordship's proposals might naturally awaken. I could easily have refuted almost every particular sentence that Lord Petre pronounced, either from the word of God and those arguments deducible from the commandments binding upon the Jews and Christians ; or even from heathen morality ; or philosophically ; or politically ; or historically ; or by contradictory informations ; or satirical personalities ; but, as it was in my own house, and as I felt myself indispensibly bound to reject the whole of his Lordship's overtures, and to keep steadfast, I imagined that a polite denial might be a prudent discharge of duty at that time, without grating his Lordship's heart and understanding by sudden and immediate investigations into the corrupt nature of all his doctrines and purposes with me ; by such severe and critical replies, or by such plain logical deductions and inferences as I could perceive his Lordship, in that conversation, was very frequently liable to.

I told this conversation to a friend the same evening ; and to

the Rev. Erasmus Middleton, of Black-Friers, some days after. I told Mr. Edmund Burke also that Lord Petre had been with me, and that I was sorry I could not comply with his Lordship's requests. I had reason to look upon Mr. Burke as the parliamentary political agent for the Roman Catholics, and he used to look upon me as one of the agents on the opposite side, and was always very polite and civil on those matters, in private, till after this conversation with Lord Petre; and since that, I believe he has never once shewed the smallest sign of acquaintance or familiarity which had subsisted between us for some years.

Soon after this conversation with Lord Petre, Mr. James Fisher, an attorney in White-chapel, and Secretary to the Protestant Associations of London, Westminster, and the Borough of Southwark, convened a very numerous meeting of the Committee at the Old Crown and Rolls Tavern in Chancery Lane, and to my no small astonishment proposed the very motion to the Committee *to delay presenting the Petition of the Protestant Association*. Erasmus Middleton and I were both struck with the apparent treachery of the proposal. We neither of us thought it prudent to mention in the Committee at large the conversation with Lord Petre; yet we opposed the motion strenuously, on many other grounds, and with some suitable variety of arguments. The Committee, notwithstanding, were pleased to carry Mr Fisher's motion haughtily and triumphantly against us, dividing a vast majority, as many as the room could hold, against two. However Mr. Middleton was not so easily to be got the better of; and I told them all, very plainly, to consider what serious business they were engaged in, and what silly arguments they had used against Mr. Middleton and me; and I assured them, that I would submit their arguments and ours, upon that motion of delay, to the honest deliberation of the Association at large, at their first public meeting, and be guided and bound by their decision only.—Now N. B.—Before the next public meeting of the Association, they all, and Mr. Fisher in person at my house, acquainted me that they were come over entirely to Mr Middleton's opinions and mine *not to postpone presenting the Petition*; and begged of me, earnestly, to say nothing of the differences in the Committee to the Association at large. Neither Mr. Middleton or I thought it worth our while to expose Mr. Fisher to the Association; or to make any remarks upon the weaknesses of those gentlemen of the Committee whom he had deluded by his speciousness; but from that moment, I believe, neither Mr. Middleton or I reposed any confidence at all in Mr. James Fisher.

I remem-

I remember very well telling the Speaker of the House of Commons, Sir Fletcher Norton, about that time, that I had reasons to suspect the firmness of the Secretary of the Protestant Association.

Sir Fletcher, very wisely, advised me *to change him directly*.

I answered my friend, Sir Fletcher, that the business of the Association was so near concluded I did not think it worth while to change him.

I am sorry to say that Mr. Fisher's firmness and integrity were suspected long before I joined the English Protestants. The independent ministers very honestly warned me with respect to Mr. Fisher's character and conduct in other undertakings they had observed him engaged in. I found him a man of some education and what may be called an Orator; very fluent, and specious, and crotching, and submissive, with a plentiful command of crying, and canting, and whining about religion in his speeches; and no lack of buffoonery and low jesting, which he never spared when he used to remind the people of the coarse manner he and their Committee had been received and treated by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and other Bishops, before I joined their Association. Hearing Mr. Fisher so often speak in the very grossest manner of Lord North and the rest of the King's servants, and of the Archbishop and Bishops conduct; which he compared to that of *hackney coachmen*, I had frequent occasions, as President, to preserve decency and order; and to remind Mr. Fisher repeatedly from the chair that he ought to speak to the people in a more becoming language; and that we must not indulge a belief that a Protestant Committee had been received rudely by persons of such high rank, though Archbishops and Bishops might indeed have thought fit to reject a Petition against Popery.

I dare say a great majority of the Committee would have been against Mr. Fisher's motion *for postponing the presenting of the Petition*, if I had had the same opportunity of communicating Lord Petre's conversation to them that I had to Mr. Middleton. There were some honest and learned Men in that Committee from the beginning.

I had a very difficult part to act in the spring of the year 1780, both in the House of Commons and out of it.

In the House of Commons I had every day to reply, first, to Lord North and the Ministerial party; and then to Mr. Fox and Mr. Burke, who used in those days to make a great deal of noise in favour of the petitions for the redress of grievances. I always doubted their sincerity in those windy harangues. I thought

thought they were no real friends to the people. I suspected all along that they were only making horses of Mr. Wyvill and the Yorkshiremen to ride into office upon, and to compass the winning-posts of the political race ground.

Out of the House of Commons, I was in the midst of the Protestant Association, Fifty Thousand strong and valiant, and at hand in London and the environs: and I really believe that they would have done any lawful act that I desired them to do, from the general good opinion they entertained of my public conduct, though they did not know any of the variety of temptations which I had resisted, with contempt and abhorrence, rather than desert my own principles, and their cause.

I thought it my duty to God, and my fellow citizens, to be studious, and exert my endeavours, to the uttermost, to promote the success of the Protestant Petitions, if possible, without bringing odium and disgrace on his Majesty's confidential servants: and yet, every body knows, that on the part of government every mean and dirty tool of the court, and every newspaper throughout these kingdoms, was set at work to blacken and vilify my reputation in the eyes of all Europe.

G. GORDON.

(To be continued.)